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WEST AFRICAN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Review of Medicolegal Autopsies in South-South Nigeria

Examen des Autopsies Médicolégales dans le Sud du Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: Study of medicolegal autopsies (MLA) in an area helps to equip policy makers about the nature and pattern of preventable deaths in that area.

OBJECTIVE: To review the pattern of MLA seen in a typical Nigerian population.

METHODOLOGY: The duplicate copies of the autopsy reports issued over 12 years, were retrieved and analyzed for age, sex, cause of death, autopsy diagnosis and circumstances of death.

RESULTS: A total of 1,664 MLA were done during the period. The mean age of cases seen was 39.10 ± 17.02 , with a male to female ratio of 3.6: 1. All age groups were seen with age groups 20–29 and 30–39 years accounting for majority of cases. Homicidal deaths (45.4%) was the commonest manner of deaths, followed by accidental deaths (32.5%). There was a significant association between manner of death and sex. Sixty-two point nine percent of the homicidal deaths were due to firearm injuries. In both sexes, road traffic accident (RTA) was the major cause of accidental deaths accounting for 82.8%. There was no significant association between type of accidental death and sex, though the male to female ratio was 3.3:1. Hanging was the method of choice for suicide and accounted for 68.4% of all suicides. Cardiovascular system diseases accounted for most cases of natural deaths (59.9%), with myocardial infarction being responsible for 29.1% of all natural deaths.

CONCLUSION: Unfortunately, preventable deaths due to homicides by firearm injuries and accidental deaths due to RTA are still prevalent in our environment and mainly involves young people. WAJM 2021; 38(1): 59–66.

Keywords: Medicolegal autopsies, Road traffic accidents, Homicides, Firearms.

RÉSUMÉ

CONTEXTE: L'étude des autopsies médico-légales (MLA) dans une région permet d'informer les décideurs politiques sur la nature et le schéma des décès évitables dans cette région.

OBJECTIF: Examiner les tendances en matière d'autopsies médico-légales observées dans une population nigériane typique.

MÉTHODOLOGIE: Les doubles des rapports d'autopsie délivrés sur 12 ans ont été récupérés et analysés en fonction de l'âge, du sexe, de la cause du décès, du diagnostic de l'autopsie et des circonstances du décès.

RÉSULTATS: Un total de 1 664 MLA ont été effectués pendant cette période. L'âge moyen des cas examinés était de $39,10 \pm 17,02$ ans, avec un ratio homme/femme de 3,6:1. Tous les groupes d'âge ont été examinés, les groupes 20-29 ans et 30-39 ans représentant la majorité des cas. Les décès homicides (45,4 %) ont été les plus fréquents, suivis par les décès accidentels (32,5 %). Il y avait une association significative entre la manière de mourir et le sexe. Soixante-deux virgule neuf pour cent des décès homicides étaient dus à des blessures par arme à feu. Chez les deux sexes, l'accident de la route (ACR) était la principale cause de décès accidentels, avec 82,8 %. Il n'y a pas de lien significatif entre le type de décès accidentel et le sexe, bien que le ratio hommes/femmes soit de 3,3:1. La pendaison était la méthode de choix pour le suicide et représentait 68,4 % de tous les suicides. Les maladies du système cardiovasculaire représentaient la plupart des cas de décès naturels (59,9 %), l'infarctus du myocarde étant responsable de 29,1 % des décès entièrement naturels.

CONCLUSION: Malheureusement, les décès évitables dus à des homicides par arme à feu et les décès accidentels dus à l'ACR sont encore très répandus dans notre environnement et concernent principalement les jeunes. WAJM 2021; 38(1): 59–66.

Mots-clés: Autopsies médico-légales, Accidents de la route, Homicides, Armes à feu.

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Abbreviations: **Hypt**, Hypertension; **IHD**, Ischemic Heart Disease; **M:F**, Male to Female Ratio; **MI**, Myocardial Infarction; **MLA**, Medicolegal Autopsies; **NS**, Not Stated; **RTA**, Road Traffic Accident.